

# Hunger Doesn't Take a Summer Vacation

## Summer Food Service Program Talking Points

**Our children are suffering from a summer vacation “nutrition gap.”**



- During the school year, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) serves just over 14 million free or reduced price meals on a given day. During the summer, that number drops to one million, and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) serves 2 million lunches each day. This is only about 14 percent of the free and reduced price school lunches served on a given day during the regular school year.
- More than 20,000 school food authorities operate the National School Lunch Program in over 98,000 schools during the regular school year; by contrast, the total number of school sponsors in the SFSP in July 2000 was only 1,610, less than 10 percent of all school districts nationwide.

**It is particularly important for the SFSP to become more accessible.**

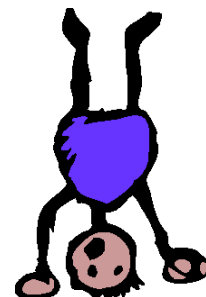
- Research shows that there is a link between a nutritious diet and a child's mental alertness and cognitive development.
- The SFSP is a nutrition link between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next.
- The SFSP is specifically designed to serve low-income areas.

**In recent years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has undertaken a number of initiatives to attract additional sponsors,** particularly schools, and to build partnerships that can assist local operators or potential operators.

**Under Secretary Eric Bost is building on these efforts, and moving forward with new ideas to enhance program sponsorship and participation.** For example, waivers are available to school districts to streamline reimbursement procedures and to make their administrative and monitoring requirements more efficient.

**Through legislation sponsored by Senator Lugar, we have launched a more extensive three-year pilot in 14 states with low rates of participation in SFSP.** The pilot is designed to simplify and streamline the administration of the Summer Food Service Program in public entities such as schools. This is already generating positive results:

- One of the pilot states is putting schools in contact with private nonprofit organizations that provide activities for children during the summer. The schools will provide the meals for children and the private non-profit will provide the activity program.



- Some states are identifying summer schools that do not provide any meal service and encouraging them to participate in either the National School Lunch Program or the Summer Food Service Program.
- Others are encouraging existing sponsors to add sites in order to make the program more cost-efficient and accessible to children.

**All states are gearing up for the 2002 SFSP program, and FNS will provide unprecedented support.**

- If you sponsored the program last year, please continue and consider expanding your program to add sites, extend the duration of the program, or add another meal service. If you are not a current sponsor, consider becoming one.
- If you are not a potential sponsor, we still need your help. You can partner with USDA by:
  - Raising general awareness of the summer hunger problem and the role of the SFSP through a variety of media, including print, radio, television and the Internet.
  - Educating and encouraging other partners – parents, community leaders, government officials, non-profit organizations on all levels – on the need for SFSPs in their areas.
  - Educating and encouraging potential sponsors for the program.



**We are committed to ensuring that no child is left behind,** and this means caring for our children throughout the entire year whether or not school is in session. To make this commitment a reality, we need more partners at the local level.